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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results of a counseling survey completed by 523 middle school students at Crook County Middle School, Prineville, Oregon, to provide data regarding student concerns in the areas of health and growth, personality, school, home and family, friends, and the future. Results are reported for each of the six categories by grade (sixth, seventh, or eighth), sex, and class. Class concerns given are the total scores for boys and girls in a grade. The top concerns for each division are listed, similarities and differences in concerns for grade and sex are noted, and comments are included for each category. Findings are presented showing that differences between sexes or grades were not significant and that major concerns reported were: (1) appearance, weight, and physical development (health and growth); (2) mistakes made, temper, and not being smart enough (personality); (3) getting poor grades/not passing (school); (4) communications and independence issues (home and family); (5) clothes, having a boy/girl friend, and being bored (friends); and (6) how to earn money, nuclear war, what to do after high school, and what to be in adulthood (future). The 10 items of least concern to students and the 10 items of most concern are listed and five recommendations based on these findings are suggested. The counseling survey is included. (NB)

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COUNSELING SURVEY

CROOK COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL

CONDUCTED BY

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1985

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PURPOSE

The purpose of the counseling survey is to provide current data regarding student concerns in the areas of Health and Growth, Personality, School, Home and Family, Friends, and Future. At present, no such data is available for the Crook County Middle School student body.

The results will serve the following functions:

1. To give students a basis for comparison of concerns by sex and grade.
2. To increase teacher understanding of the physical, emotional and social needs of students in this age range.
3. To fulfill OAR 581-22-702 (2c) which required the identification of students' concerns.
4. To provide for parent/community education regarding the middle school adolescent.
5. To indicate discussion topics and group activities for future homeroom programs.

RESULTS

A total of 523 out of 606 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students completed the Counseling Survey. By grade and sex, the tallies were:

217 eighth graders:	113 boys, 104 girls
164 seventh graders:	86 boys, 76 girls
142 sixth graders:	75 boys, 67 girls
523 students	274 boys, 247 girls

Results are reported for each of the six categories by grade, sex, and class. Class concerns are the total scores for both boys and girls in a grade. Also, the top concerns for each division are listed. Similiarities and differences in concerns for grade and sex are noted.

I. HEALTH AND GROWTH: CONCERNS/DISCUSSION

Eighth Grade

Girls: How I look, my weight and my size.

Boys: How I look, my physical development, and my weight/concern for a physical handicap.

Class: How I look, my physical development, and my weight.

Seventh Grade

Girls: How I look, my weight, sickness/not feeling well.

Boys: How I look, my physical development, sickness/not feeling well.

Class: How I look, my weight, my physical development.

Sixth Grade

Girls: How I look, my weight, and sickness/not feeling well.

Boys: How I look, my physical development and my weight, sickness/not feeling well.

Class: How I look, my weight, sickness/not feeling well/my physical development.

Comments:

Responses for Health and Growth showed no differences by sex or grade. Both boys and girls in all three grades were concerned about how they looked, their weight, and their physical development.

These findings are consistent with research in this area, that is, kids this age want to appear like everyone else. They are very aware of and concerned about physical differences. While adults realize this to be a period of rapid physical change, they may forget the emotional sensitivity of the adolescent regarding this physical development. Adults, especially teachers and parents need to keep in mind the impact of their innocent comments regarding physical features and lags in physical development of kids this age. We often unknowingly build the self-esteem of those kids who need it the least (they are already taller, stronger, better looking) and tear down those youngsters that need esteem the most - "Boy, you're a short thing", "What grade are you in?", "What size do you wear?" These are common adult comments which only serve to further spotlight the fact a youngster is not as physically developed as his/her peers.

II. MY PERSONALITY: CONCERNS/DISCUSSION

Eighth Grade

Girls: Mistakes I have made, being popular, and not being smart enough/ my temper.

Boys: Mistakes I have made, my temper, and being made fun of or teased.

Class: Mistakes I have made, my temper, and not being smart enough.

Seventh Grade

Girls: Mistakes I have made, not being smart enough, my temper.

Boys: My temper, mistakes I have made, not being smart enough.

Class: Mistakes I have made, my temper, not being smart enough.

Sixth Grade

Girls: Mistakes I have made/being made fun of or teased, not being smart enough, and my temper/being popular.

Boys: Mistakes I have made/my temper, and being popular.

Class: Mistakes I have made, being made fun of or teased/my temper, and being popular.

Comments:

Responses for personality were similar for both boys and girls at all grade levels. Mistakes I have made, my temper, and not being smart enough were the three main general concerns. In addition, being popular (8th grade girls/6th grade boys), and being made fun of/teased (8th grade boys/6th grade girls) were areas of above average concern.

Mistakes I have made was a surprise for us as the main topic of concern in this section. It is unclear what students are indicating here especially in light of their lack of concern for the question about feeling guilty (question # 8). It would seem the two should in some way compliment each other.

However, early adolescent's thought processes often run in absolutes, that is, the use of words like always, never, everyone, and no one are common. Feelings and events are magnified, problems are compounded. Therefore, mistakes they have made might carry more impact, significance or be exaggerated more than is realistic.

The respondents recognized temper as a problem area for many of them. Adults often observe that young adolescents do not/can not control their temper. The vacillation in moods during this stage of development often leaves the young adolescent feeling out of control. Temper is one recognition of the swift emotional swings for this age group.

Even youngsters who are doing well academically may be unsure of their ability, feel they are not smart enough. Young adolescents are still developing their personality. As with physical development, kids also make comparisons as to their mental abilities.

Students this age are very conscientious of their popularity and interaction with their peer group. At this stage of social development, peer group actions, words, and pressures are more influential than adult rhetoric.

III. SCHOOL AND SCHOOL WORK: CONCERNS/DISCUSSION

Eighth Grade

Girls: Getting poor grades/not passing, getting into trouble, and too much school work to do at home/don't understand the work.

Boys: Getting poor grades/not passing, too much school work to do at home, and getting into trouble.

Class: Getting poor grades/not passing, too much school work to do at home, and getting into trouble.

Seventh Grade

Girls: Getting poor grades/not passing, too much school work to do at home, getting into trouble.

Boys: Getting poor grades/not passing, too much school work to do at home, school is to strict/don't like school.

Class: Getting poor grades/not passing, too much school work to do at home, getting into trouble/school is too strict.

Sixth Grade

Girls: Getting poor grades/not passing, getting into trouble, and too much school work to do at home.

Boys: Getting poor grades/not passing, getting into trouble, and don't like school.

Class: Getting poor grades/not passing, getting into trouble, and too much school work to do at home.

Comments:

Getting poor grades/not passing was the primary concern of both boys and girls in each of the grade levels that were surveyed. So, although youngsters actions (or lack of) and words often cause us to wonder if they really care about grades, in their thoughts grades/not passing are very important. Too much school work to do at home was also a major concern for everyone except 6th grade boys. Since this subject has also been broached in academic conferences between students and counselors, there may be more to it than just laziness and complaining. For the most part, youngsters at this age are not that organized, are not that responsible, and many have poor study habits. These things, coupled with getting home late on the bus, or chores, going to bed and getting up early, and other responsibilities or duties expected by parents eat up time. Middle schools need to look at this concern and decide if more study skills/ student organization and less homework (or both) is the answer.

Although it did not make the list of top three for 7th grade boys, getting into trouble was a major concern for everyone else at each grade level. Most of the comments associated with getting poor grades apply to youngsters concerns for getting into trouble.

IV. HOME AND FAMILY: CONCERNS/DISCUSSION

Eighth Grade

Girls: Not enough freedom, parents not understanding me, and family relations/quarreling or arguing with family members.

Boys: Family relations, not enough freedom, and being treated like a baby/parents not understanding me.

Class: Family relations/not enough freedom, parents not understanding me, and quarreling or arguing with family members/being treated like a baby.

Seventh Grade

Girls: Being treated like a baby/parents not understanding me, quarreling or arguing with family members.

Boys: Not enough freedom, parents not understanding me, quarreling or arguing with family members.

Class: Parents not understanding me, not enough freedom, quarreling or arguing with family members.

Sixth Grade

Girls: Parents not understanding me, family relations, and parents expecting too much of me.

Boys: Quarreling/arguing with family members, family relations/parents not understanding me.

Class: Parents not understanding me, quarreling/arguing with family members, and family relations.

Comments:

In general, the major concerns in Home and Family center around communication and independence issues. Parents not understanding me, family relations, quarreling/arguing with family members signal some form of miscommunication. between the young adolescent and other family members. While this is a frustrating period for both parent and child, it really should come as no surprise. Youngsters at this stage are developing their own values, ideas, and standards. They have a strong allegiance to peer group thought.

Interwoven with communication issues is the issue of independence as reflected by concerns for not enough freedom and being treated like a baby. The pre - and young teenager of the middle school is truly in-between. In-between childhood and young adulthood. Unlike the older teenager who has rites of passage (can drive a car or at least have a permit, being able to legally work) there are no socially or legally recognized symbols of independence for students in this age group. Their need for defining their own values, ideas, and standards parallels their need for independence from child-like care. While adults may recognize the need for independence of thought and actions in the young teenager, they often forget that the growth toward independence occurs in spurts and plateaus. It is not an orderly progression. Therefore, such erratic wishes/actions by adolescents often precipitate parent/child quarreling, arguing, and other forms of miscommunication.

V. FRIENDS AND OTHER PEOPLE: CONCERNS/DISCUSSION

Eighth Grade

Girls: My clothes, being bored/making friends, and having a boy friend.

Boys: Being bored, having a girl friend, and my clothes/making friends.

Class: My clothes, being bored, and making friends/having a girl/boy friend.

Seventh Grade

Girls: Having a boy friend, my clothes/people gossiping, making friends.

Boys: Being bored, making friends/my clothes, having a girl friend.

Class: Having girl/boy friend, being bored/my clothes, making friends.

Sixth Grade

Girls: My clothes, making friends, and people gossiping.

Boys: Being bored and having a girl friend/problems with other kids.

Class: Being bored, my clothes, and having girl/boy friend.

Comments:

Boys in all three grades listed being bored as their top concern. Eighth grade girls were concerned about their clothes, while seventh and sixth graders were concerned about having a boy friend. These three concerns, my clothes, having a boy/girl friend, and being bored, figured in the top three concerns for both sexes and grade levels.

As noted in the Health and Growth section, these students are very concerned about how they look. Concern for clothes is another indication of their need to appear like everyone else.

It is also at this age, that the student is discovering his/her social self, that is, how to relate and form new friendships and relationships. This includes getting involved with members of the opposite sex. It's prestige, it's being wanted, to have a boy/girl friend. It's also someone else saying, in a way for all to hear, that you are someone special.

"I'm bored, that's boring," are two favorite sayings of the young adolescent. If we analyze what is happening when they profess boredom and compare it to children's interests at this age, it is not hard to figure out. "I'm bored" when it comes to parents, home, chores, school work. Things are not boring when it comes to talking on the phone, being with friends, relaxing, buying things for me, doing things that I choose to do. Frustrating as youngsters may be with this boring bit, adults become upset because they are not interested in what we feel they should be.

VI. MY FUTURE: CONCERNS/DISCUSSION

Eighth Grade

Girls: What am I going to be/deciding what to do after high school and how to earn money.

Boys: How to earn money, what am I going to be, and deciding what to do after high school.

Class: How to earn money, what am I going to be, and deciding what to do after high school.

Seventh Grade

Girls: How to earn money, what am I going to be, death/dying/deciding what to do after high school.

Boys: Nuclear war, how to earn money, deciding what to do after high school.

Class: How to earn money, nuclear war, deciding what to do after high school/what am I going to be.

Sixth Grade

Girls: How to earn money, what am I going to be, and nuclear war.

Boys: How to earn money, nuclear war, and deciding what to do after high school.

Class: How to earn money, nuclear war, and deciding what to do after high school.

Comments:

Overall this category, My Future, was the dominate category of interest for both sexes and all three grade levels. How to earn money, nuclear war, what to do after high school, and what am I going to be, were apparently very important concerns for the young adolescent. These issues had so many concerned marks that the item Death/dying, although having enough points to put it in first place in another category, came in last place in this category.

The issue of money and what I'm going to be and do fall into the pattern of independence, freedom, choice, and self-centered ideas that have been discussed in other categories. Nuclear war is something that could affect them; something most of the young people have heard about but really have little knowledge concerning it. Nuclear war is this nebulous thing that could prevent them from doing what they want. And to make it more of a threat to them, the how, when, why, where or who of a nuclear war is unknown.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

It is interesting to note that while there are differences in concerns between boys and girls and among the different grade levels there is more agreement than dissent. Differences are really not even significant enough to set the sexes or grade levels apart. Overall in tallying the results of all categories the following ten items are the ones students are least concerned about.

Least concerned - School wide, boys and girls (numbers represent weighted score totals)

1. Daydreaming 344
2. Not being a member of a certain group 382
3. Being too easily hurt 398
4. Being shy or bashful 408
5. Feeling guilty 429
6. Feeling jealous 430
7. Deciding what classes to take 430
8. A physical handicap 443
9. Lacking self confidence 453
10. Family seldom discusses things 490

Most concerned - School wide, boys and girls (numbers represent weighted score totals)

1. How to earn money 983
2. Getting poor grades/not passing 952
3. How I look 914
4. Nuclear war 892
5. Deciding what to do after high school 867
6. What am I going to be 855
7. Mistakes I have made 748
8. Too much school work to do at home 738
9. Parents not understanding me 732
10. My clothes 728

RECOMMENDATIONS

Current data (the results of this survey) regarding the concerns of boys and girls in grades six, seven, and eight is now available to students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other interested adults. In conjunction with the stated purposes of this survey, we offer the following recommendations:

1. To give students a basis for comparison of concerns by sex and grade. Feedback to students will be accomplished by:
   a. Counselors/teachers talking with classes.
   b. Making posters or outlining survey results.
   c. Making individual counseling time available for students who want to discuss specific concerns.
2. To increase teacher understanding of the physical, emotional, and social needs of students, this report shall be available. Teachers will receive an abbreviated report covering the results. Using teachers' meeting, discussion group, and possibly inservice meetings, counselors will interact with teachers to try and find new and better ways to deal with youngsters.
3. To demonstrate compliance with OAR 581-22-702 (2c) an abbreviated copy of the results of this survey will be sent to the State Department of Education.
4. To provide for parent/community awareness several possible avenues of dissemination are suggested:
   a. Report via school newsletter.
   b. Newspaper report.
   c. Send summary of data home with students.
   d. Utilize channel 11 to alert the public to the availability of the survey.
   e. Print summary booklet for dissemination at open house, registration, and parent conferences.
5. To provide our students with an in-depth discussion of their concerns teachers/counselors will utilize homeroom periods. During this time teachers/counselors will be prepared to provide students with insights and information that will enable them to become better equipped to deal with their concerns.

COUNSELING SURVEY

Grade (Circle) 6, 7, 8 Age_____ Boy_____ Girl_____

Please check the box that best describes your answer to the following statements. Use the following scale:

Concerned A Lot:	Means that you spend a lot of time thinking or worrying about it.
Concerned A Little:	Means that you spend some time thinking or worrying about it.
Not Concerned:	Means you seldom think or worry about it, or it may be a problem you have already solved.

After each category there is a space marked other. If you have a concern that was not listed in that category, write it down and mark the proper box.

Remember: There are no right or wrong answers! Your answer will be confidential as no name is to be put on the survey.

	Concerned A Lot	Concerned A Little	Not Concerned
I. HEALTH AND GROWTH			
1. My weight			
2. My size			
3. My physical development			
4. Sickness/not feeling well			
5. A physical handicap (such as glasses, hearing aide, limp, lisp, etc.)			
6. How I look			
7. Other_____			
_____			
II. MY PERSONALITY:			
1. Not being smart enough			
2. My temper			
3. Daydreaming			
4. Being too easily hurt			
5. Being shy or bashful			
6. Being teased or made fun of			
7. Lacking self-confidence			
8. Feeling guilty			
9. Feeling jealous			
10. Mistakes I have made			
11. Being popular			
12. Other_____			
_____			
III. SCHOOL AND SCHOOL WORK			
1. Getting poor grades/not passing			
2. Getting into trouble			
3. Too much school work to do at home			
4. Can't concentrate			
5. School is too strict			
6. Don't like school			
7. Being called on in class			
8. Deciding what classes to take			
9. Don't understand the work			
10. Other_____			
_____			

	Concerned A Lot	Concerned A Little	Not Concerned
IV. HOME AND FAMILY			
1. Money problems at home			
2. Family relationships			
3. Parents not understanding me			
4. Parents telling me what to do			
5. Parents expecting too much of me			
6. Quarreling or arguing with family members			
7. Seldom discuss things			
8. Being treated like a baby			
9. Not enough freedom			
10. Other_____			
_____			
V. FRIENDS AND OTHER PEOPLE			
1. Making friends			
2. My clothes			
3. People gossiping			
4. Being bored			
5. Not being a member of a certain group			
6. Having girl/boy friend			
7. Problems with other kids			
8. Other_____			
_____			
VI. MY FUTURE			
1. Nuclear war			
2. How to earn money			
3. Deciding what to do after high school			
4. What am I going to be			
5. Death/dying			
6. Other_____			
_____			

Of all the things listed on this sheet, what thing or things concern you the most?

_____

_____

What thing or things concern you the least?_____

_____

_____

What thing or things do you feel best about?_____

_____

_____

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